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ABSTRACT

The booklet is intended to make handicapped persons and/or their parents aware of the principal government services for which they may be eligible. Benefits specifically applicable to blind, deaf, and developmentally disabled persons are covered. Names and addresses of the various federal agencies are included for further reference to state and local services. The following types of services are examined: programs for specific disabilities, vocational rehabilitation, education, employment, financial assistance, medical assistance, civil rights, housing, tax benefits, and transportation. (CL)

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Pocket Guide to Federal Help for the Disabled Person...

EC180587

Pocket Guide to Federal Help

for the Disabled Person . . .

Produced by
the Office of Information and Resources
for the Handicapped
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202
February 1985

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PREFACE

This brochure is meant to make you, a handicapped individual or parent/guardian of a handicapped child, aware of the principal government services for which you may be eligible. This revised edition describes benefits applicable specifically to blind, deaf, and developmentally disabled persons. These groups are also eligible for the general benefits as outlined in this brochure.

Because so much of the Federal contribution to services for the handicapped is made to states—and the states determine how to spend the money, within certain guidelines—it would be impossible to pinpoint exactly what you will find in your own state or locality. What we have tried to outine for you in this brochure is the general scope of Federal support for services to the handicapped. Included are the names and addresses of the various Federal agencies that can steer you to their state and/or local counterpart offices. You may also wish to contact us for a listing of key agencies in your state. These agencies should be your starting point for exploring the services available to you where you live. Write to the Federal Headquarters if you are unable to reach your state service agencies directly.

States and localities may provide services they finance out of their own resources. These are not discussed in this brochure. To find out about any of these special programs, contact an information and referral center if one operates near you; usually every large metropolitan area and some smaller ones operate these referral centers, to help put you in touch with the array of services for which you may qualify.

We hope this brochure will alert you to the variety of services which may be of benefit to you

and that it will get you started on the road to contacting those that are pertinent to your needs. Every time you call a state or local agency, we advise that you ask for the names of other people or agencies that might also be helpful. You may accumulate a number of useful and helpful contacts in this way.

However, if you come up against some specific problem and don't know how to proceed, write to us with details and we will do our best to connect you with the service you need, if it is available. Write to:

Clearinghouse on the Handicapped
Department of Education
Room 3132 Switzer Building
Washington, D.C. 20202-2319

If you are a handicapped veteran and want to know about the many programs available to you, apply to your nearest Veterans Administration field office or write to:

Veterans Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

Programs for Low Income, Indian, or Elderly Populations

If you are an American Indian, a person over 65, or a person with little or no income, you may qualify for additional programs based on factors other than your handicap. For leads on tracking these down, call your local welfare office (for the Food Stamp program, for instance), your local public housing authority, or your Indian tribal housing authority. If you are elderly, you may be eligible for special nutrition programs such as Meals on Wheels, or for other special services. The Federal Government provides funds for area resource centers for the aging, usually listed in the Yellow Pages

under "Aged" or "Elderly" or "Social Services."

A Word of Advice

Use this booklet to help you track down the appropriate agencies nearest you. Remember, not every service is available. Not every person can be helped 100%. But if you are patient, probing, and realistic, we trust you will unearth useful information and contacts to help you.

Keep in mind that every year new programs begin and some old ones dissolve, particularly at the state and local levels. Keep in touch with your contacts and stay as aware as you can, through reading and talking to knowledgeable people, of what is happening in the area of services to the handicapped. There are many excellent voluntary organizations, as well as state, local, and Federal offices that can help you. Numerous newsletters are produced by groups of and for the handicapped.

We hope you will take advantage of all these avenues and that your search for help will be a most fruitful one.

PROGRAMS FOR SPECIFIC DISABILITY GROUPS

Special programs and benefits for blind and deaf individuals are listed in the appropriate section (e.g., vocational rehabilitation or education). Since the Program for Developmental Disabilities encompasses medical assistance, job training, social and other services, and is administered by a special state agency, it is described in its entirety below.

Programs for Developmentally Disabled Individuals

The developmentally disabled program makes use of existing services in health, welfare, education, and rehabilitation to provide for the long-range needs of people with developmental disabilities. These disabilities are defined as severe, chronic disabilities attributable to mental or physical impairment, which are manifested before age 22, result in substantial functional limitations in several areas of life, and require services over an extended period.

Availability of services will vary in all communities, and services can include diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of the handicapping condition, personal care, day care, and special living arrangements; training for jobs, education, and sheltered employment; recreation programs; social and legal services; information and referral to services; and transportation.

Under the law, disabled persons have a right to "appropriate treatment, services, and habilitation." A major component in the DD program is the basic state grant—a formula grant to states for planning, administration, and services. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of services through comprehensive planning, co-

ordination of resources, and developing programs to fill gaps in services.

Each state has a designated agency to administer the developmental disabilities program. Also in each state is a protection and advocacy office where developmentally disabled people or their parents can turn if they do not find help in their communities. At the national level, the address is:

Administration on Developmental Disabilities
Department of Health and Human Services
Room 340 E Humphrey Building
Washington D.C. 20201

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

All states have vocational rehabilitation agencies to help handicapped persons become employable, by providing a wide range of services, financial assistance, and training.

Expenses borne by the program will vary widely from case to case and state to state. Individual cases are evaluated carefully. Each state's resources differ and are allocated according to guidelines of the state as well as recommendations of individual vocational rehabilitation counselors and administrators.

An individual plan for rehabilitation is worked out for every eligible handicapped individual, through meetings of that individual and the counselors, to determine the individual's potential existing skills, and other resources. During this process and throughout the rehabilitation, the program may provide a variety of services, including the following:

- A medical examination, to determine the extent of disability, one's suitability for employment, and specific medical help needed.

• Counseling and guidance to determine the individual's rehabilitation potential, employment potential and the type(s) of employment most suitable for him/her.

• Medical help to reduce or remove disability and improve or restore job performance. This help includes medical, surgical, psychiatric, and hospital services; artificial limbs, braces, hearing devices, and eyeglasses needed on the job.

• Job training at trade schools, rehabilitation centers, or at home.

• Educational opportunities, including payment of college tuition and fees and other educational expenses as necessary, if college is required for the individual to be able to earn a livelihood.

• Financial assistance during the rehabilitation period for room and board, transportation, and other necessary assistance.

• Referral and job placement.

• On the job help, if needed, including expenses related to getting to your job or keeping your job.

The Federal Government provides extensive support to the states for vocational rehabilitation services. However, the services themselves are very individualized, and information useful to the individual must be sought at the state and local rather than the Federal level.

For Blind Persons

In 28 states, a separate commission (and in all other states a special vocational rehabilitation unit) deals specifically with services to blind persons. Staff of these units limit their caseloads to blind clients or serve as consultants on the blind to regular vocational rehabilitation counselors. They are trained to assist the blind

client in learning skills of daily living, in mobility training, in filling out job application forms, and in other rehabilitation needs specific to the blind. These units also provide funding for reader services for blind college students.

For Deaf Persons

Special emphasis on rehabilitation services to the deaf has its origin at the Federal level within the Rehabilitation Services Administration at:

Deafness and Communicative Disorders Branch
Switzer Building, M/S 2312
Washington, D.C. 20202
(202) 732-1401 (Voice) or 732-1298 (TDD)

This office provides leadership and consultation to state agencies in developing rehabilitation programs and services for those persons suffering from deafness and communicative disorders. The DCDB also develops telecommunications and sensory or other technological aids and devices.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration maintains a specialist in deafness rehabilitation in each of the ten RSA regional offices, and sponsors numerous rehabilitation counselors for special training in working with deaf clients. The agency also funds three special rehabilitation projects around the country to assist the underachieving deaf person whose maximum potential has not been reached.

For Deaf/Blind Persons

The Federal Government provides funds that help support the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults. To explore your eligibility for the Center's rehabilitation programs, write:

Helen Keller National Center
111 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, N.Y. 11050
(516) 944-8900 (voice or TTY)

EDUCATION

The Federal Government provides assistance at many levels to enable children, youth, and adults to receive education and training. Disabled persons share the same right to educational opportunities and services as anyone else.

Your Rights Under the Law

Under the provisions of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142), your state and local school district must provide an appropriate elementary and secondary education for your disabled child from age 6 through 21. In those states mandating public education for children age 3 to 5, P.L. 94-142 requires that disabled children of that age group be found and educated in the least restrictive environment and, insofar as it is appropriate, that they be educated with nondisabled children. This education must cost you no more than it costs parents of non-handicapped children.

All parents have the right to participate in and approve the individual education plan developed for their child. When children are placed in private schools by state or *local education systems* in order to receive an appropriate education, this must be done at no cost to the parent. Additional services such as transportation and special aids must also be provided at public expense.

Final responsibility for implementing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act rests with the state education agency. *For further informa-*

tion on special education programs in your state or locality, contact your state, county, or local education offices.

Additional information on relevant sources of assistance in your state, the rights of disabled children and their parents, appeal procedures, and general advocacy information in the education field is available from:

National Information Center for
Handicapped Children and Youth
1555 Wilson Blvd., Suite 508
Rosslyn, VA 22209
(703) 522-3332

Head Start

Project Head Start was developed by state and local education systems with Federal assistance during the last decade. It is a child development program which provides comprehensive educational and social services, parent involvement and health services (including medical, dental, nutrition and mental health services) to preschool children, age 3 to 5, of low-income families.

The 1972 Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act call for at least 10 percent of the nationwide enrollment in Head Start to consist of children who are handicapped and require special services.

For more information about eligibility and available Head Start programs in your area, contact your local school board or look under "Project Head Start" in your telephone directory.

Schools for the Blind

There are approximately 55 special schools for blind children throughout the county which provide specific educational and training curricula for grade levels K through 12. Examples of

courses include: Braille, skills of daily living, orientation and mobility, plus the full range of regular academic curricula offered in other schools. Many of these schools will also accept blind students with multiple handicaps. For further information on schools in your area, contact your local school district.

Library Services for Special Groups

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has a network of cooperating regional libraries throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Together they produce and distribute—on free loan—an extensive collection of books, magazines, bibliographies, directories, and reference circulars. These are made available in Braille and recorded form, along with the necessary playback equipment. Eligible persons are U.S. citizens (here or abroad) who cannot hold, or who cannot read standard printed matter; these include the blind, some physical handicapped individuals, and those who are learning disabled. Certification by a competent authority (usually a physican) as to the nature of the disability is all that is needed in order to apply for services. For further information on any of these services, or to locate the regional library in your area, write:

National Library Service for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20542

For Deaf Persons

The Department of Education office supports postsecondary education of deaf individuals through six major programs across the country and twenty-three single and multi-state projects serving deaf-blind children and youth. For information, write:

Special Education Programs
Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Schools for the Deaf

There are 62 public residential schools in the United States for deaf children. These schools accept children from infancy through 12th grade. The children receive educational training along with speech therapy, lip reading, use of hearing aids, and sign language. Contact your local or State Board of Education for the location of a school within your state.

Gallaudet College is funded by the Federal Government and was estaolished to provide a liberal higher education for deaf persons. In addition to its undergraduate program, Gallaudet operates a graduate program at the master's level for teacher preparation, and a program of research. On agreement with ED, Gallaudet operates a model Secondary School for the Deaf for students from the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The College also operates the Kendall Elementary Demonstration School which experiments in techniques and materials and disseminates information to educational facilities for deaf children. For more information, write:

Gallaudet College
800 Florida Ave. N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, N.Y., was created by public law as a special technical college for deaf students from all states. Many receive financial assistance to study at NTID from their state vocational rehabilitation agencies. For more information, write to:

Office of Career Opportunities
National Technical Institute for the Deaf
One Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14623

Federal Student Financial Aid

There is no specific Federal financial aid program to enable handicapped individuals to attend college except where the vocational rehabilitation agency has determined that the best preparation for a job for a particular individual is a college education. In these cases financial assistance may be provided. There are, however, four kinds of Federal financial aid programs available to all students in need:

- grants given on the basis of financial need. Money received does not have to be repaid;
- loans which must be repaid;
- work-study programs in which you are given a part-time job to help you through school;
- benefits, such as GI Bill, Social Security and Junior GI which do not have to be repaid.

To learn more about the various Federal student aid programs, see your high school guidance counselor or the financial aid officer at any college or vocational school, or write directly to:

Office of Student Financial Assistance
P.O. Box 84
Washington, D.C. 20044

EMPLOYMENT

There are currently more than 2,000 local Employment Security (ES) offices located throughout the U.S. More commonly referred to as State Employment Services or State Job Services, these public employment centers exist to

help employers find workers, and workers to find jobs. Helping handicapped job seekers is a specific responsibility of the ES, and each office is mandated by law to employ a specialist trained to work with disabled people, or to refer you to other agencies to make sure that you get the help you need from all sources.

For more information or for help in finding a job, look in your telephone directory under "employment services" and it should refer you to the state agency responsible for the ES program in your area.

Federal Jobs

All Federal jobs for regular appointment must be announced to the public and are filled on a competitive basis. There are a small number of special "A" appointment positions for handicapped individuals, however, which are not competitive under the following conditions:

- mentally retarded individuals referred by their vocational rehabilitation counselor;

- severely physically handicapped individuals referred through their vocational rehabilitation counselor or taking a 700 hour trial appointment.

Federal Job Information Centers

For more information about Federal employment possibilities, you should contact the nearest Federal Job Information Center. The Office of Personnel Management maintains many centers to provide Federal job information and to help you apply for Federal employment. Special arrangements are available for handicapped individuals. Federal Job Information Centers are listed under "U.S. Government" in metropolitan area phone directories. Federal employment information will also be posted in all State Job Service agencies.

Some of the tests used in screening Federal job applicants can be taken by a blind/visually impaired person in Braille, large type, or in recorded from. If the test is not available in any of these formats, the Job Information Center is required to provide reader assistance to insure that the same standards are used in screening all applicants.

In addition, all Federal agencies have selective placement coordinators who provide assistance to handicapped individuals.

State Job Services

State, county, and local governments have their own civil service systems which can also be explored for possible job opportunities. In addition, most states have a Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped which works with business and industry to open up job opportunities for handicapped individuals.

For blind persons, State Job Services will provide reader assistance for taking any state test in applying for a job.

JTPA

The Job Training Partnership Program (JPTA) was created to prepare youth and unskilled adults for entry into the labor force and to afford job training to those economically disadvantaged individuals and other individuals facing serious barriers to employment, who are in special need of training to obtain productive employment. Many handicapped individuals will fit the eligibility criteria. Your local State Employment Security Service or Mayor's Office will be able to give you more information about JTPA programs in your area.

Small Business Administration

Handicapped persons interested in going into business for themselves may qualify for Federal assistance and low cost loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA). If there is no listing in your phone book for an SBA office in your area write to:

Small Business Administration
Director, Office of Financing
1441 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20416

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There are two basic Federal programs providing direct and continuing financial assistance to disabled persons:

Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits

Social Security disability insurance benefits may be paid to a disabled worker under 65 and his or her family when earnings are lost or reduced due to the worker's disability.

You may be considered "disabled" if you have a physical or mental impairment which (1) prevents you from working and (2) is expected to last for at least 12 months or to result in death. A person is considered "blind" with central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of corrective lenses or visual field reduction of 20 degrees or less.

Before a disabled worker and his or her family can get benefits, the worker must have credit for a certain amount of work under social security. The exact amount of work credit needed depends on the worker's age.

Monthly disability benefits can be paid to a disabled worker's:

(1) Unmarried children under 18 (or under 19 if full-time high school or elementary school students);

(2) Unmarried children 18 or older who were severely disabled before 22 and continue to be disabled;

(3) Wife or husband 62 or older;

(4) Wife under 62 if she's caring for the worker's child who is under 18 or disabled and getting a benefit based on the disabled worker's earnings.

NOTE: Children 18 or older who were disabled before 22 also can receive monthly benefits when either parent becomes entitled to retirement payments or dies after having worked long enough under social security. A disabled widow or widower or disabled surviving divorced wife 50 or older may be eligible for monthly survivors payments when a worker dies.

The people in any social security office will be glad to answer any questions you may have. They also have a wide variety of publications. Single copies are free. Local social security offices are listed in the telephone directory under "Social Security Administration."

Supplemental Security Income

Supplemental security income (SSI) makes monthly payments to aged, disabled, and blind people who have limited income and resources (assets).

To receive SSI payments on the basis of disability or blindness, you must meet the social security definition of "disabled" or "blind" (see page 12). But, you do not need any social security work credits to get SSI payments. People may be eligible for SSI even if they have never

worked. And, people who get SSI checks can get social security checks, too, if they are eligible for both.

Disabled and blind children, as well as adults, may qualify for SSI payments. It makes no difference how young a person is.

To be eligible for SSI, you must have limited income and resources, be a resident of the U.S. or Northern Mariana Islands, and be either a U.S. citizen or a lawfully admitted immigrant.

Not all of your income and resources are counted in determining if you are eligible for SSI. Generally, the first $20 a month of unearned income and the first $65 a month in earnings are not counted. Income above these levels usually reduces the amount of the basic SSI payment. A home and the land adjacent to it are not counted. Personal effects or household goods, a car, and life insurance policies may not count, depending on their value. The Federal Government does not put liens on recipients' homes.

States may add to the Federal SSI payments. The States also provide Medicaid, food stamps, and various social and rehabilitation services.

For more information about SSI, contact your local social security office.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

The primary sources of Federal medical assistance for disabled persons are Medicare and Medicaid; Crippled Children's Services; and the early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program.

Medicare

The health insurance program is designed to serve everyone over 65 years of age and disabled persons under 65 years of age who:

(1) have been entitled to receive Social Security disability benefits for a total of 24 months; or

(2) who need dialysis treatments or kidney transplant because of permanent kidney failure.

The program is not based on income, but is available regardless of financial need.

The Medicare program has two parts:

Part A: Hospital insurance at no cost that helps pay for care while in the hospital and for related health care services after leaving the hospital.

Part B: Voluntary medical insurance at a monthly premium that helps pay doctor bills and other approved medical services.

More information about Medicare is available from your local Social Security Office, or by writing to:

Health Care Financing Administration
Inquiries Branch
Rm. 1-P-4, East Lowrise Bldg.
Baltimore, MD 21207

Medicaid

Medicaid (Medical Assistance Programs) is a joint Federal/state program to provide physical and related health care services to persons with low incomes. Disabled persons may be eligible for Medicaid on the basis of their income.

Because eligiblity is determined by your state program of public assistance (welfare) on the basis of broad Federal guidelines, there are geographic differences between eligibility requirements and types of services covered. Generally, persons may be eligible for Medicaid if they are receiving welfare or other public assistance benefits or Supplemental Security Income or

are blind or disabled. Medicaid services are available in all states except Arizona.

Individuals with higher incomes may be eligible for Medicaid Supplemental Medical Care Assistance, or their children may be eligible if medical expenses exceed a given percentage of their annual income.

Each state establishes its own eligibility requirements for Medicaid.

Further information on Medicaid and assistance in applying is available from your local or state welfare or public assistance office.

If you cannot get information locally, write to:

Health Care Financing Administration
Inquiries Branch
Rm. 1-P-4, East Lowrise Bldg.
Baltimore, MD 21207

Crippled Children's Services

Crippled Children's Services (CCS) is a joint Federal/state program to provide medical and related services to handicapped children from birth to age 21.

All states must provide medical diagnosis and evaluation free for all children. (No state residence period is required before such services are provided.) The range and cost of additional treatment or hospital care services vary from state to state. All programs accept third party payments such as Medicaid, Blue Cross and Blue Shield and other medical insurance.

For further information on what is available to your handicapped child, contact your local, county or state health department.

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program (EPSDT)

The EPSDT program screens children from poor families to identify whether health care or related services may be necessary.

Children receiving state Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits, and children whose parents or guardians are receiving Medicaid, and/or local or state public assistance benefits are eligible for EPSDT.

EPSDT programs vary from state to state and are administered by either state public assistance (welfare) or health departments.

For more information on EPSDT contact your physician, local or state health department or public assistance office.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Office for Civil Rights

A disabled person has rights guaranteed by law to education, employment, health care, senior citizen activities, welfare, and any other public or private services in programs or activities that receive Federal assistance.

It is the responsibility of the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services to enforce Federal laws prohibiting discrimination against persons on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap in federally assisted programs or activities, and to investigate discrimination complaints brought by individuals under these statutes.

If you feel that your rights have been violated—because of your disability or your child's disability—by a hospital, school, or any other institution in any of their Federally assisted programs

or activities, write, giving details, to the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education (ED) (about schools and postsecondary institutions), and of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (about hospitals, social services) in your region.

Region I (Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., R.I., VT.)
Office for Civil Rights, ED
McCormack P.O. & Courthouse, Rm. 222
Boston, MA 02109
(617) 223-4282

Office for Civil Rights, HHS
John F. Kennedy Federal Bldg., Rm. 2403
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 223-6397

Region II (N.J., N.Y., Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)
26 Federal Plaza, 33rd Floor
New York, NY 10278
ED: (212) 264-4633
HHS: (212) 264-3313

Region III (Del., D.C., Md., Pa., Va., W. Va.)
3535 Market St., Rm. 6300
Philadelphia, PA 19101
ED: (215) 596-6092
HHS: (215) 596-5191

Region IV (Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., Miss., N.C. S.C., Tenn.)
101 Marietta Street, Atlanta, GA 30323
ED: (404) 221-2806-27th Floor
HHS: (404) 221-2855-28th Floor

Region V (Ill., Ind., Mich., Minn., Ohio, Wis.)
300 South Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60606
ED: (312) 886-3064
HHS: (312) 886-2359

Region VI (Ark., La., N.M., Okla., Texas)
1200 Main Tower Building,
Dallas, TX 75202
ED: (214) 767-3951-Room 1930
HHS: (214) 767-4056-Room 1500

Region VII (Iowa, Kan., Mo., Neb.)
Office for Civil Rights, ED
324 E. 11th Street, 24th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 374-2474

Office for Civil Rights, HHS
601 E. 12th Street, Rm. 248
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 374-6367

Region VIII (Colo., Mont., N.D., S.D., Utah, Wyo.)
1961 Stout Street,
Denver, CO 80294
ED: (303) 837-5695-Room 1185
HHS: (303) 837-2024-Room 1326

Region IX (Ariz., Calif., Hawaii, Nev., Guam, Trust Terr. Pac. Islands, Amer. Samoa)
1275 Market St., 14th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103
ED: (415) 556-9894
HHS: (415) 556-8586

Region X (Alaska, Idaho, Ore., Wash.)
2901 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121
ED: (206) 442-1636-M/S 106
HHS: (206) 442-0473-M/S 510

Office of Federal Contract Compliance

Every employer doing business with the Federal Government under contract for more than $2,500 must take "affirmative action" to hire handicapped people. If you believe that you have been denied a job by such a contractor

because of your disability, a complaint can be filed with the:

Office of Federal Contract Compliance
Department of Labor
Washington, D.C. 20210

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-480) decreed that all buildings constructed, leased, or altered with Federal funds since the passage of the Act must be accessible to handicapped individuals.

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB) is the Federal agency created to enforce the standards. If you have a complaint about an inaccessible building or you would like to receive the A&TBCB's brochure, *Access America: The Architectural Barriers Act and You,* Write:

Architectural and Transportation Barriers
Compliance Board
Washington, D.C. 20202
(202) 245-1591

The Board offers technical assistance in a variety of areas including architectural and attitudinal barriers, housing, recreation and transportation. Write the Office of Technical Assistance at the above address or call (202) 472-2700 (voice or TDD).

HOUSING

Loans

If you are a handicapped individual and need to adapt your home to your needs, you may be eligible for a Title I Home Improvement Loan insured by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD-insured

loan can be used to remove architectural barriers, hazards, or inconvenient features in the home. Improvements can be handled on a do-it-yourself basis or through a contractor. The loans are applied for through banks or other lending institutions. HUD insures the lender against possible loss.

Low income individuals may be eligible for loans from the Farmers Home Administration to purchase or repair a home which is on a farm or in a very rural area. For more information, write to:

Farmers Home Administration
Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Rent Assistance

Low income families (including the handicapped) may be eligible for housing assistance payments from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Payments by HUD are made directly to the owners of rental units to make up the difference between the HUD-approved rental amount and the amount the tenant is required to pay. Tenants pay between 25 and 30% of their adjusted income (gross income less certain deductions and exceptions). Rental assistance payments under this arrangement are not considered additional income to the tenant who is also eligible for Supplemental Security Income payments from the Social Security Administration.

For further information on rent assistance or other housing programs benefiting the handicapped, write to:

Special Advisor on the Handicapped
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
Room 10184
Washington, D.C. 20410

TAX BENEFITS

In the computation of income tax, the Internal Revenue Service allows many medical and dental expenses to be deducted from income (in this case, of the disabled individual or his/her parents). Deductible items include:

- Special equipment such as a motorized wheelchair, specially equipped automobile, and special telephone for the deaf.

- Special items, including artificial teeth, artificial limbs, eyeglasses, hearing aids and their component parts, crutches, and dogs for the blind or deaf.

- The cost and repair of special telephone equipment that enables a deaf person to communicate effectively over a regular telephone by means of converted teletype signals.

- Payments for the installation of special equipment in the home or for similar improvements made for medical purposes, such as ramps, or elevators for heart patients. (If these improvements increase the value of the property, expenses incurred will only be deducted to the extent that they exceed the increase in property value.)

- Payments to a special school for a mentally or physically handicapped individual, if the principal reason for attendance is the institution's resources for alleviating the handicap.

In addition, the IRS allows tax credits for the cost of disabled dependent or disabled spouse care. Payment to relatives who provide this

care can be included if the relative is not your dependent or your child under 19. For further information on tax credits and deductions, contact your local IRS Office.

For the blind person, the tax law allows an additional personal exemption because of his/her blindness, over and above the one claimed by everyone.

TRANSPORTATION

In recent years, the Federal Government has stepped up its efforts to make transportation systems more accessible to handicapped travelers. New regulations have been passed and better information is now available to assist handicapped individuals in planning trips and using public transportation systems.

Barriers still exist, however, and those with physical handicaps must plan and prepare trips much more carefully than the average traveler.

Air

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) now requires each U.S. airline to have a national company policy (approved by the FAA) on accessibility and individual services to handicapped individuals. These policies vary from airline to airline, so it is advisable to make your special needs as a handicapped person known at the time you make your reservations and to inquire whether the airline provides the service you need.

For more information, contact the individual airline directly. Also helpful is the publication, *Access Travel: A Guide to Accessibility of Airport Terminals. Available from:*

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Rail

Amtrak, the country's major passenger rail system, will become increasingly more accessible to handicapped individuals over the next few years. This Federally subsidized rail system has announced that it will add to its system only new cars fitted with special facilities for the handicapped.

Information on accessibility of trains and stations and assistance available to handicapped or elderly passengers may be obtained from an authorized travel agent or by calling Amtrak. Dial (800) 555-1212 to request the tollfree Amtrak number in your state (in some areas it is necessary to dial "1" before a long distance number).

Deaf persons with access to a teletypewriter may receive information and make reservations for travel by calling (800) 523-6590 (except in Pennsylvania, call (800) 562-6960).

Handicapped travelers with a card or physician's letter showing disability are allowed a 25 percent discount on round trip travel by Amtrak with the exception of certain holidays. Dog guides for the blind or deaf are the only animals allowed on Amtrak.

Amtrak also has a brochure, *Access Amtrak,* for handicapped travelers. To request copies, write:

Amtrak Distribution Center
P.O. Box 7717
Itasca, IL 60143

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